

APPROACHING THE NATURE OF YESHUA FROM THE TANACH

assuring his people of their future resurrection in the age to come. Thus, the title *the first and the last* has a religious significance in Revelation that is parallel to that in Isaiah.¹⁴⁹

Recognizing the Tanach background (Isaiah 41:1; 44:6-8; 48:12-13) behind the title “the first and the last,” and its being employed to describe Yeshua the Messiah (Revelation 1:17; 2:8; 21:6; 22:13), can mean one of only two things for the Bible reader. (1) Either the author of Revelation has committed blasphemy against the God of Israel, in claiming that Yeshua of Nazareth can possess the same titles of the One who said “I am the first and I am the last,” immediately qualified with, “And there is no God besides Me.” Or, (2) with Yeshua the Messiah possessing the titles of “the first and the last,” the author of Revelation, the Apostle John, genuinely regarded Him to be uncreated and integrated into the Divine Identity. In other words, the Apostle John, a First Century Jewish monotheist, could not have called Yeshua the Messiah “the first and the last,” unless He was God (discussed further).

ISAIAH 45:18-25

“For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it *and* did not create it a waste place, *but* formed it to be inhabited), ‘I am the LORD, and there is none else. I have not spoken in secret, In some dark land; I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, “Seek Me in a waste place”; I, the LORD, speak righteousness, declaring things that are upright. Gather yourselves and come; draw near together, you fugitives of the nations; they have no knowledge, who carry about their wooden idol and pray to a god who cannot save. Declare and set forth *your case*; indeed, let them consult together. Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none except Me. Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear *allegiance*. They will say of Me, ‘Only in the LORD are righteousness and strength.’ Men will come to Him, and all who were angry at Him will be put to shame. In the LORD all the offspring of Israel will be justified and will glory.”

Today’s Bible readers, from the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries, can be at somewhat of a disadvantage, in that we all believe that the One God of Israel is a universal deity to which all of humankind should turn to for salvation and to worship. The scene of Isaiah 45:1-25, where the Lord used the Persian Cyrus to deliver His people, could have certainly struck a chord with many God-faithful Jews who originally heard it, as it would have forced many to recognize that the pagans at large were to turn to acknowledge, worship, and serve the same God as them. This is a God who was superior to any carved idols, which would be absolutely powerless to answer the true needs of a human being. The God of Israel decreed that as His people would see their Kingdom restored, that the nations at large would come to recognize Him and cast aside their idols. As Isaiah 45:13-15 exclaims,

“I have aroused him {Cyrus} in righteousness and I will make all his ways smooth; he will build My city and will let My exiles go free, without any payment or reward,’ says the LORD of hosts. Thus says the LORD, ‘The products of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush and the Sabeans, men of stature, will come over to you and will be yours; they will walk behind you, they will come over in chains and will bow down to you; they will make supplication to you: “Surely, God is

¹⁴⁹ Robert M. Bowman, Jr. and J. Ed Komoszewski, *Putting Jesus in His Place: The Case for the Deity of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), pp 178-179.

with you, and there is none else, no other God [akh bakh El, v'ain 'od efes elohim, וְאֵין עֹד אֶפֶס אֱלֹהִים, וְאֵין עֹד אֱלֹהִים אֵל אֶל [אֵין עֹד אֱלֹהִים אֵל אֶל]” Truly, You are a God who hides Himself, O God of Israel, Savior [Elohei Yisrael moshi'a, מוֹשִׁיעַ יִשְׂרָאֵל מוֹשִׁיעַ יִשְׂרָאֵל]!”

Benjamin D. Sommer’s conclusions on Isaiah 45:1-25, in *The Jewish Study Bible*, are quite accurate:

“This speech focuses on the Persian king Cyrus as the tool through whom God brings salvation not only to Israel but to the whole world. After Cyrus allows the exiles to return to Jerusalem, peoples the world over will recognize the LORD’s faithfulness to the covenant made with Israel, and consequently they will join Israel in worshipping the one true God.”¹⁵⁰

We should not have problems with recognizing that without the return of the Southern Kingdom exiles from Babylon, the reconstruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, and the subsequent emergence of Second Temple Judaism—that the mechanisms for a widespread exposure to the God of Israel to the nations at large would not have been in place. We commonly credit the spread of the good news of Yeshua (Jesus) of Nazareth being Israel’s Messiah, as being the cause of a broad, worldwide spread of monotheism (cf. John 17:3). This is something based in the return of the exiles, and in how participating in the rebuilding of Israel’s Kingdom, the nations will turn away from their worthless idols.

The word of the God of Israel to the pagans, of the nations at large, is one of welcome invitation: “Gather yourselves, come and approach together, O survivors of the nations, who do not know, who carry about the wood of their graven image, and pray to a god who cannot save” (Isaiah 45:20, ATS). And, He is absolutely forthright about His identity as the Only True God: “Proclaim and approach; even let [your leaders] take counsel together: Who let this be heard for aforesaid, or related it from of old? Is it not I, HASHEM? There is no other god besides Me [v'ain-od elohim m'bal'adai, וְאֵין-עֹד אֱלֹהִים מִבְּלָעַדַי]; there is no righteous god besides Me and no savior other than Me” (Isaiah 45:21, ATS). The admonition of the God of Israel, to kol-afsei-eretz (כָּל-אַפְסֵי-אֶרֶץ) or “all the ends of the earth,” is that all might turn to Him to be saved, that every knee would bow to Him, and every tongue would swear allegiance to Him:

“Turn to Me and be saved, all ends of the earth, for I am God and there is no other. I swear by Myself, righteousness has gone forth from My mouth, a word that will not be rescinded: that to Me shall every knee kneel and every tongue swear” (Isaiah 45:22-23, ATS).

Some universal recognition, of the God of Israel, still has not taken place in human history—whether by the free will choice of people, or by some forced acknowledgment. Jews and Christians alike believe that in the future Messianic Age—even with the latter believing Yeshua of Nazareth to be the Messiah—that there is a greater, worldwide recognition of the God of Israel as the Creator. The oracle of Isaiah 45:18-25 represents the LORD God (YHWH) as One who is inviting and welcoming of all of His human creations turning to Him for salvation and deliverance. As Oswalt properly concludes in the *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, “God intends that the whole earth acknowledge him as God and come to him to be saved. No one will be exempt (v. 23; cf. Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:10-11). There is no other savior (v. 24; cf. Acts 4:12).”¹⁵¹

The statements of Isaiah 45:23 are quoted later, in the *Carmen Christi* hymn of Philippians 2:5-11, particularly in regard to the future, universal recognition of Yeshua the Messiah:

¹⁵⁰ Benjamin D. Sommer, “Isaiah,” in *Jewish Study Bible*, 875.

¹⁵¹ John N. Oswalt, “Isaiah,” in D.A. Carson, gen. ed., *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, 2011 NIV (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 1411.

“[S]o that at the name of Yeshua EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Yeshua the Messiah is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

The reference to the oracle of Isaiah 45:18-25 in Philippians 2:5-11, certainly suggests that Yeshua the Messiah is involved in the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy. Yeshua is also to certainly be the means by which there will be a universal recognition of the Lord God of Israel, whether by volition or by coercion, in the eschaton. (This is not a promise of universal salvation.) Yet, what is intended by every tongue confessing *hoti Kurios Iēsous Christos, eis doxan Theou patros* (ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρὸς), “that Yeshua the Messiah is Lord—to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:11, TLV)?

The key statement of Isaiah 45:23, *ki-li tik’ra kol-berekh* (כִּי-לִי תִכְרַע כָּל-בְּרֵךְ), “To Me every knee shall bend” (Isaiah 45:23, NJPS)—rendered by the Greek Septuagint as *hoti emoi kampsei pan gonu* (ὅτι ἐμοὶ κάμψει πᾶν γόνυ), “because to me every knee shall bow” (NETS)—is adapted by Philippians 2:10 to become, *en tō onomati Iēsou pan gonu kampsē* (ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ πᾶν γόνυ κάμψει). The personal pronoun “Me” of Isaiah 45:23—which is very clearly the Lord or YHWH (Isaiah 45:21)—is substituted with Yeshua or Jesus in Philippians 2:10. And, when this Yeshua is to be recognized as “Lord” by all of Creation, the only *Kurios* (κύριος) or Lord present within the oracle of Isaiah 45:18-25, is the One who declares *ani YHWH* (אֲנִי יְהוָה; Isaiah 45:21), as the title *Kurios* frequently rendered the Divine Name YHWH/YHVH in the LXX. **Yeshua the Messiah, is without question, integrated into the Divine Identity in the application of Isaiah 45:18-25 in Philippians 2:5-11.** One would not expect any supernatural yet created being, to be declared as the *Kurios*, the LORD or YHWH, to which all people must turn toward for their salvation. Yet, Yeshua the Messiah is identified in Philippians 2:5-11 to be the LORD or YHWH of Isaiah 45:18-25 (discussed further).

ISAIAH 63:9

“In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, and He lifted them and carried them all the days of old.”

In a selection of Isaianic statements recalling the goodness of the God of Israel, specifically involving the Exodus (Isaiah 63:11-12), a reference is made to *malakh panayv* (מַלְאָךְ פָּנָיו), or “the messenger of His presence” (Isaiah 63:9, YLT). When readers of Isaiah 63:9 encounter this verse isolated, then the statement would seem to suggest that this *malakh panayv* is just a supernatural agent sent from God, to perform important acts of deliverance for His people in past history. Might it be that such a *malakh panayv* has just a notable distinction among members of the Heavenly host, but that this is ultimately just a created being like the rest? Motyer’s observations on this figure being “the Angel of His Face” (LITV) need to be considered:

“The angel of his presence is ‘the angel of his face’. The face means personal, recognizable presence. This is the angelic being who made the Lord’s presence recognizably real among his people...distinct from God only in so far as God-in-revelation is different from God-in-himself.”¹⁵²

It should not be surprising that various examiners have concluded that “the messenger of His face/presence” of Isaiah 63:9, is the previous figure encountered encountered in the Tanach or Old Testament of the *malakh YHWH*, the “messenger/angel of the LORD.” This entity was the means by which God proper saw to the deliverance and salvation of Ancient Israel in the Exodus, and as previously examined, is frequently seen speaking in the first person “I” as the LORD or YHWH. In his commentary on Isaiah, Oswalt draws the conclusion that the *malakh panayv* of

¹⁵² Motyer, *Isaiah*, pp 513-514.